

Busting Fracking Myths



Fracking is the practise of blasting water, chemicals and sand deep into oil and gas wells to shatter source rock. When shattered, the rock releases oil and gas which is brought to the surface along with large amounts of toxic fluid called flow back and/or produced water. Fracking is short for 'Unconventional Hydraulic Fracturing'.

Myth: Fracking is safe.

Fact: No scientific study has proven fracking or its toxic waste to be 'safe'. Studies repeatedly show fracking is harmful to life. Increased infant birth defects are recorded in communities living close to fracking sites.⁽¹⁾

Myth: Fracking does not contaminate water.

Fact: Serious contamination of ground water has been documented overseas, and increasingly in NZ. Taranaki Regional Council has recorded elevated levels of benzene and toluene in groundwater. Around Kapuni well sites, groundwater has been recorded unfit for drinking, stock-use and irrigation since 2004. Four states in America confirm drinking water has been contaminated by drilling and fracking. European regulations class flowback water as radioactive waste.⁽²⁾

Myth: Landfarming?

Fact: 'Landfarm' is a modern term that describes a profitable toxic waste dump. Blocks of land are leased for 10 or more years and then drilling and fracking waste is received—for a price. Increasingly, drilling wastes from other areas, e.g. East Coast are being trucked across the North Island to Taranaki for disposal. Regulators admit little is known of the accumulative effects but allow large amounts of pollutants to be disposed of on farms. The waste includes undisclosed chemicals that therefore can not be monitored or assessed. Dairy cows, bulls and cattle have all been reported in areas recently spread with drilling waste.⁽²⁾

Myth: Farming on oil and gas waste is strictly regulated in NZ.

Fact: Nearly all well sites in Taranaki are permitted to discharge contaminants onto land and into streams and tributaries. Of more than 150 drilling, fracking, production and disposal sites across Taranaki, most sit on or next to farms. NZ has NO regulations that determine a safe withholding period between laying the waste and animals grazing upon it, and NO requirements that meat products destined for human consumption be screened or tested before going to market. Fonterra say they will not take milk from any further 'landfarms' citing the cost of testing as being an issue.⁽³⁾⁽⁴⁾

Myth: The NZ petroleum industry are world leaders in safety.

Fact: 61 dangerous petroleum incidents have been recorded by the High Hazards Unit in just seven months, most were at onshore wells. In April 2014 reported incidents include two fires at installations, six uncontrolled releases of hydrocarbons, 15 events that saw emergency response plans activated and three incidents with the potential to cause a major accident.⁽⁵⁾

Myth: Oil and gas companies in NZ operate within international best practise models.

Fact: Todd Taranaki breached a resource consent permit nine times in just one year. Todd, Tag Oil, Greymouth, BTW and others regularly breach conditions intended to protect public health and the environment. Penalties for breaching the permits range from minimal to none at all.⁽²⁾

Myth: Only small amounts of household chemicals are used in fracking.

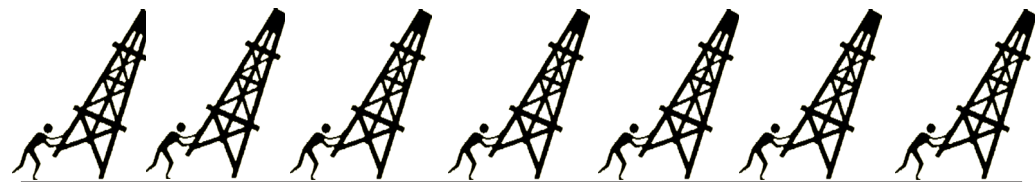
Fact: Tag Oil used over 4,000 litres of undiluted chemicals in just one well. BTW reported frack waste on their 'landfarm' contained Gluteraldehyde which is highly toxic and dangerous at levels barely detectable in tests.⁽⁶⁾⁽²⁾

Myth: The petroleum industry brings with it wealth and economic growth.

Fact: 'Economically inert' is how NZ's most developed oil and gas region has been described. The area is Eltham to Waitara, population approx 20,000 and the TET charity reports annually "injecting much-needed cash into what has become an economically inert area."⁽⁷⁾

Myth: Pumping waste into deep injection wells is harmless.

Fact: Earthquakes attributed to wastewater injection include a 4.8 in Texas, 5.3 in Colorado, 4.7 in Arkansas and 3.9 in Ohio.⁽⁸⁾



References

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- (4) <http://www.radionz.co.nz/news/rural/238124/mpi-leaves-landfarms-risks-to-farmers>
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